



## National Center for Learning Disabilities

*The power to hope, to learn, and to succeed*

### Self-Advocacy for Teens and Adults



Having learning disabilities often means having special needs. As an adult it's up to you to make sure your rights are being respected and that the accommodations you need are available to you. Whether at school or at work, being an advocate for yourself means understanding your rights, understanding how you learn best and working with others to ensure that your special needs are met.

[LD.org](#) has a section called [Living with LD](#) that has details about dealing with the different aspects of learning disabilities (LD) that you may face as a teenager and as an adult. Here, we'll focus on how to be your own best spokesperson at school and at work.

#### Being your own advocate in high school

- Attend all your IEP (Individualized Education Plan) meetings. You have a right to be there and should take an active part in the meetings. It's a great opportunity to talk to teachers, administrators and others that are involved with your education (including your parents or guardians) about how you learn and what kinds of services and supports you need to do well in school. Make sure the specific accommodations you need are outlined in your IEP.
- Set goals for yourself and think realistically about reaching them. Part of your IEP process calls for establishing a transition plan as early as possible, outlining your path to graduation, what you want to do after high school and the accommodations you might need after you leave. If you hope to go to college, what subjects do you want to study? What college are you interested in? Will that college permit you to substitute requirements or have them waived? To get into that school, what grades will you need to get and which classes should you take? Don't feel like once you decide on something that it's set in stone - adjusting your goals is an important part of realizing what you want and what it will take to achieve success.
- Be aware of what you're good at, what you struggle with, what activities you have a passion for and what your ideal job or project would be - being able to share this kind of information with others is a valuable part of representing yourself.
- Learn as much as you can about your LD. The more you know about your specific learning disability, the easier it will be for you to figure out how you learn best and the accommodations you will need to be successful.
- Meet with your teachers and counselors outside of the IEP meeting to talk about your classes, about the accommodations you may have (extra time on tests or a note-taking buddy, for example) and other helpful strategies, as well as what you're interested in pursuing next.
- Request that your school update your LD documentation before you leave high school.

#### Being your own advocate in college

Once you graduate from high school, responsibility for attending to your special needs moves away from the educational system and onto your shoulders. It's up to you to make your college career successful. Here are some tips:

- Make sure you arrive on campus able to provide current documentation of your disability.
- Know your rights. You have a right to participate in educational programs without discrimination and to receive reasonable accommodations in courses and exams.
- Meet with your advisors to talk about what you want to learn; discuss what challenges you may encounter and how you can accommodate for them. If you need specific support and services, you must disclose your learning disability to your instructors and others who can help you.